

my Republican colleagues to stop playing politics with the economic welfare of 10 million hard working people.

HONORING LIEUTENANT RICHARD BEIRNE AS IRISHMAN OF THE YEAR

HON. ROSA L. DeLAURO

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 14, 2000

Ms. DeLAURO. Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise today to join West Haven's Irish community as it honors Lieutenant Richard Beirne as Irishman of the Year. His outstanding record of service, both professional and volunteer, serves as an example to us all.

Lieutenant Beirne has dedicated his lifetime to the West Haven community, devoting himself to improving the lot of our children and families. He began his career as a volunteer fireman in 1975, and was inducted as a career firefighter with the West Shore Fire Department in 1980. Few things are more important than feeling safe in our homes and workplaces. Whether hosing down flames, rescuing a child from a burning house, or waiting for our call, firefighters are there to protect us and provide us with the peace of mind we need to sleep at night. For twenty-five years, Lieutenant Beirne has shown a commitment to protect our community. There are no words that can express our sincere thanks and appreciation for his service.

Beyond his commendable professional career, Lieutenant Beirne has an unparalleled record of community involvement. A member of several service organizations, Lieutenant Beirne has made a tremendous effort to promote Irish-American culture. In addition, Lieutenant Beirne currently serves as the Vice President of Local 1198 Professional Firefighters Union AFL-CIO, he is working to ensure that firefighters—hard working men and women—are assured livable wages, quality health benefits, and secure pensions to support themselves and their families. Despite all of these commitments, Lieutenant Beirne still finds time to volunteer as the EMT for the Pop Warner Football League. Providing this service at practices as well as games, he ensures the safety of every child participating in the league. Lieutenant Beirne has shown an incredible level of commitment to his community. He has been a mentor to many youngsters and serves as an inspiration to us all.

Today, a community will gather to honor Richard Beirne as Irishman of the Year. I cannot think of a more deserving individual to be given such a title. I am pleased to join with his wife, Susan, children, Patrick and Katie, friends and the entire West Haven community in congratulating him on this very special honor. My best wishes to Richard and his family for continued health and happiness.

A TRIBUTE TO LEVERT HOAG A WONDERFUL AMERICAN

HON. SCOTT McINNIS

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 14, 2000

Mr. McINNIS. Mr. Speaker, it is with great sadness that I wish to take this moment to recognize the remarkable life and significant achievements of one of Pueblo's leading ladies. Though she is gone, she will live on in the hearts of all who knew her and be remembered for long years by many who didn't.

LeVert Hoag, married to the late Pueblo chieftain publisher, Frank Hoag, Jr., died at the age of 87. She was known as an outgoing, enthusiastic, kind and warm person. Mrs. Hoag had a deep interest in the community, from the time she moved there in 1935. She was an integral part to Pueblo, helping out anywhere she could to make the Pueblo community a better place to live.

She was the chairman of the first Service League Follies in 1937, member of the Pueblo Community College Foundation, sponsor of the Hoag Theater, member of the Pueblo Hall of Fame and was also active in the United Way, the Pueblo County Tuberculosis and Health Association and the Muscular Dystrophy Association. Mrs. Hoag also served on the board of the Pueblo Civic Symphony and was also an honorary chairman of the Pueblo Metropolitan Museum.

LeVert Hoag is someone who will be missed by all of us. Those who knew of her will miss spending time with her. We, as a society, have lost someone who was rare to begin with. Mrs. Hoag made the ultimate sacrifice to help a total stranger. Hopefully we can all learn from the example that LeVert Hoag set. And, perhaps, we can all try to become a little bit more like her.

RECOGNIZING THE FORMATION OF THE CONGRESSIONAL RURAL CAUCUS

HON. IKE SKELTON

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 14, 2000

Mr. SKELTON. Mr. Speaker, this week marks the official rebirth of the Congressional Rural Caucus. I am so pleased to have the opportunity to recognize the efforts of Representatives EVA CLAYTON of North Carolina, JO ANN EMERSON of Missouri, JERRY MORAN of Kansas, and EARL POMEROY of North Dakota to re-establish this important Caucus, and to thank the dozens of organizations and associations which have helped during the planning process and will continue to work with the Congressional Rural Caucus in the days ahead.

I am very excited to be a member of this new caucus. A number of years ago, I served a term as Chairman of the previously organized Congressional Rural Caucus. That group was extraordinarily valuable as an outlet for Members representing rural districts to discuss issues and work together to commu-

nicate the particular needs and concerns of rural America to the Congress as a whole. After several years of inactivity, I am glad that like-minded Members will once again have a bi-partisan organization that focuses on bringing the priorities of rural America to the forefront in the Congress.

In addition to recognizing the new membership of the Congressional Rural Caucus, I would like to say just a few words about one of the groups that has recently assisted with the organization of the Caucus and has for decades worked to improve life in rural America—the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA).

One of our nation's greatest achievements during the last century was the electrification of rural America. Before the third decade of the 20th Century, only about 10 percent of America's rural population enjoyed the benefits of electricity. The rest chopped wood, pumped water by hand or carried it from a stream, washed and rinsed the laundry in tubs in the yard. Life without electricity was especially hard on women. They aged early and died young because of the hardships of rural living.

Rural electrification provides us with a wonderful example of American ingenuity and federal cooperation. The people of rural America who needed electric service came together as cooperatives to organize and run their own electric utilities, and the government provided loans that most bankers, then or today, could not have provided prudently.

Electricity—and the Rural Electrification Administration and the vision of Congress—made a huge difference. Today, more than 99 percent of rural Americans can watch television in the comfort of an all-electric home, can enjoy the efficiencies of all manner of appliances—from toasters to air-conditioners, from grain dryers to milking machines and refrigeration.

Because now most rural Americans have electric service, some would say the job is done. I would say the job is just begun. Rural America today faces a different set of challenges. Electric cooperatives have deep roots in their communities, and they have a stake in improving the quality of life, the economics, the health and education of their communities. Electric cooperatives have traditionally provided services well beyond basic electricity, from something as simple as lighting the little league field to something as complex as providing distance learning in rural schools, Internet access, water and sewer, satellite television, economic and community development. They could do more; they would do more. We need to consider how rural Americans across the country could benefit by harnessing the talent of rural electric cooperatives in new ways in this new century.

I look forward in the coming months and years, as a member of the Congressional Rural Caucus, to addressing our new rural challenges. Again, I would like to thank the co-chairs of the Caucus and all of the organizations that have worked to bring the Congressional Rural Caucus back to life. Together I think we can be a positive force to bring true and consistent prosperity and a high quality of life to rural Americans.